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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

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NOTE FOR: The Director

FROM: David D. Gries
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SUBJECT: Korean Reunification Proposals

The Chinese are likely to discuss Korean reunification proposals with the President in Beijing. Many members of the Intelligence Community are deeply skeptical that the North Koreans have changed their basic proposals in any significant way.

- North Korea's first priority is conversion of the armistice agreement into a peace treaty with the US, to be followed by the withdrawal of US troops; their second priority is to drive a wedge between Washington and Seoul.
- The initial North Korean proposal delivered to the Chinese on the eve of the Rangoon bombing and calling for talks with the US and "Seoul authorities" was probably intended to cover up or in some way complement the assassination attempt on President Chun.

The Chinese also seem to recognize this, and since the Rangoon bombing have been backing steadily away from any kind of direct participation in talks on Korea. Although Secretary Shultz asked Premier Zhao to "work with us in the background" on a format for talks, they have so far declined to do so.

Since Seoul has recently stated its opposition to talks until the situation stabilizes somewhat, Presidential statements on this subject from Beijing might unsettle them further. The Chinese, on the other hand, probably want the President to talk about Korea publicly. Unwilling to put pressure on North Korea owing to fears of pushing P'yongyang towards Moscow, the Chinese want Washington to take the lead in bringing the parties together.

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The argument is sometimes made that since the Chinese in exchanging athletic teams and issuing visas are displaying flexibility towards South Korea, the US should act in parallel and display flexibility towards North Korea. But this ignores the fact that North Korea tried to decapitate the South Korean leadership only four months ago.

All this suggests that Washington and Beijing have an interest in sticking to private exchanges so that public statements do not drive Seoul and P'yongyang towards even less flexible positions. If the North Koreans are willing to negotiate with the South Koreans on an equal footing, we will know it in due course. There is nothing the US can accomplish by trying to hurry the process along except to damage relations with Seoul.

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Attachment:
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